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Strategy of Victory

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ZHURNAL in Russian No 5, May 88 (signed to press
21 Apr 88) pp 3-11

[Article by Col Gen V.N. Lobov: "The Strategy of Victory"]

[Text] The socialist nature of the Soviet state and its army established 70 years ago by Great October and the necessity of defending the fatherland have brought about the appearance of a new, truly scientific Soviet military strategy. Its fundamental provisions were worked out by V.I. Lenin. In putting down the bases for the policy of the world's first worker and peasant state and in leading its armed forces, he simultaneously established the principles of Soviet military strategy. In commenting here on the outstanding role of the leader, M.V. Frunze wrote: "For us and for the future generation of revolutionaries, Comrade Lenin provides brilliant examples of strategic...art."(1)

The establishing and development of Soviet military strategy occurred under the difficult conditions of the Civil War and military intervention. The content of this strategy was strongly influenced by the basic provisions worked out by V.I. Lenin of Soviet military doctrine and which from the very first days had a strictly defensive nature.

Soviet power in its legislative enactments such as the Decree on Peace, the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia as well as in the Appeal "To All the Working Moslems of Russia and the East" and other documents, has proclaimed a policy of peace and peaceful coexistence, recognition of the equality of all peoples and respect for their sovereignty. However, world imperialism and the internal counterrevolutionary forces, having rejected the peace proposals of the young socialist nation, initiated a Civil War. The task arose of the armed defense of the revolution and ensuring peaceful conditions for the building of socialism in our nation. "We are now defenders, from 25 October 1917," said V.I. Lenin, "we are in favor of the defense of the fatherland from this day on.... We are for the defense of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Russia."(2) The strictly scientific, realistic Soviet doctrine and the Soviet military strategy deriving from it made it possible to successfully carry out this task and to mobilize all the nation's forces and resources to repel aggression and defeat the main forces of interventionists and White Guards.

Due to the enormous efforts of the Communist Party and V.I. Lenin personally, a mass regular new-type army was created, fronts were organized and strategic reserves accumulated, military production and support for the operational army were established and the forms and methods of strategic actions and troop leadership were worked out. History knows no examples when the tasks of such scale and significance were carried out in such a short time and with such great effectiveness.

The position of the Soviet republic required from policy and military strategy the prompt determining of the main sector of armed combat. This task was successfully carried out by the party Central Committee headed by V.I. Lenin over the entire Civil War. The Red Army, depending upon the military-political situation, focused its efforts on combating the most dangerous enemy grouping: in the spring of 1919, on the Eastern Front against the Kolchak troops and after his defeat, on the Southern Front against Denikin (1919-1920). With a general over-all shortage of personnel and equipment, the Soviet Military Command skillfully massed them on the crucial sectors.

The basic type of operations by the Armed Forces to defeat the troops of the interventionists and domestic counterrevolution was an active strategic defensive and follow-up counteroffensives carried out, as a rule, by conducting successive offensive operations on the selected axes using the forces of several armies or one or two fronts (Southern and Southeastern in the autumn of 1919 and the Western and Southwestern in 1920). The aims of these operations were: the defeat of the large enemy groupings, the liberation of important political and economic areas (Urals, Siberia, the Ukraine, Northern Caucasus, Crimea and so forth) and the restoring of Soviet power in them. The particular nature of the Civil War was caused by the great scope of the strategic operations. These were conducted on a front from 500 to 1,400 km and continued to a depth of 400-1,000 km. The strategic counteroffensive often commenced after a stubborn defense or retreat by the Soviet troops. As a whole, military operations had a clearly expressed maneuver nature. Soviet military strategy at the same time defined the role of cavalry as the powerful mobile force of those times.

The problem of establishing strategic reserves was resolved in a new manner. In being guided by Lenin's thesis that "victory in a war will be on the side which has more reserves, more sources of strength and more tenacity coming from the very midst of the people,"(3) these were readied not only on the operational fronts and armies but also in the rear of the nation. The party and Komsomol mobilizations played an enormous role in preparing them, making it possible to quickly replenish troops on the main axes and increase their activeness and combat capability.

An important achievement in Soviet military strategy was the elaboration and practical mastery of the most effective forms and methods of strategic leadership over armed combat and this was based on the principle of the unity of political and military leadership, wide collegiality in discussing major questions. The defenses of the nation were directed by the Party Central Committee and the Council of Worker and Peasant Defense (from April 1920, the Council of Labor and Defense) headed by V.I. Lenin. These directed the efforts of the people and the army in carrying out the most important political, economic and military tasks, they provided effective planning and coordinated the activities of the front and rear.

The experience of the Civil War provided rich material for theoretical generalizations and practical conclusions and played an important role in the further development of Soviet military strategy during the interwar years. The works of S.S. Kamenev, M.V. Frunze, M.N. Tukhachevskiy, I.I. Vatsetis, B.M. Shaposhnikov, A.A. Svechin, V.K. Triandafillov and many others held a prominent place in the elaboration of its main provisions.

It was felt that a future war would assume a worldwide scale and would be conducted by mass armies. Operations would develop on vast land and sea expanses as well as in the air and they would have a decisive and fierce nature. The conclusion was drawn of the maneuver nature of future operations and the necessity of the complete preparation of the Armed Forces for conducting these. M.V. Frunze, in particular, pointed out: "...From the viewpoint of advisability and from the viewpoint of objective necessity, the Red Army, in preparing for a future war, should particularly cultivate its maneuvering qualities."(4)

Soviet military strategy felt that in fighting against the coalition of aggressor nations achieving the ultimate aims of the war would necessitate significant effort. In this context great attention was given to the questions of the mobilizational deployment of the armed forces and the stockpiling of strategic reserves. A thorough study was made of the probable methods by which an aggressor would start the war and the particular features of its initial period. As a result, by the mid-1930s, the important conclusion had been drawn that a war could commence by surprise.

In line with the rapid development of the weaponry of armed combat, great attention was given to determining the role and place of the armed services and combat arms in it as well as the methods of their employment and cooperation. In reputing the notions existing in the West on the conduct of wars predominantly by one combat arm, Soviet military strategy proceeded from the view that victory could be achieved by the joint efforts of all the forces with the leading role played by the ground troops.

Of great significance of the development of Soviet military strategy was the theory worked out in the 1930s of an operation in depth and this was based upon the idea of defeating a large enemy grouping by the simultaneous action against it to the entire depth of the operational configuration, by the rapid breaching of the defenses and by the encirclement and complete destruction of the opposing enemy. In the process of its elaboration, there was further development for the views on the methods of conducting front (army) offensive operations and combat of formations.

It was assumed that a strategic offensive with an over-all superiority in forces over the enemy would be carried out, as a rule, by conducting simultaneous or successive strategic operations by the fronts. The strategic defensive was considered a legitimate type of combat. In the front

defensive operations the troops were to hold the occupied areas stubbornly and cover the important axes in order to repulse the enemy offensive, to cause it damage and create favorable conditions for a counteroffensive.

Thus, in the interwar period, Soviet military strategy took a significant step ahead. As a whole, it correctly considered the experience of the commenced World War II. However, not all the questions and problems were completely worked out. This could not help but be influenced by the mass repressions which the military personnel was subjected to at the end of the 1930s, including many talented military leaders and scientists.

The cult of personality of I.V. Stalin and the violating of democratic leadership principles were also apparent in the departure from the main provisions of Lenin's defensive military policy and in the interpretation of not only the military-technical but also the political aspect there began to be a predominance of trends expressing a desire to shift "military operations onto the territory of the attacking enemy..."(5) and to the assertion that the Worker-Peasant Red Army would be the most aggressive army that ever advanced."(6)

The distortion of military doctrine involved serious errors in elaborating a number of theoretical provisions of strategy and in carrying out measures to prepare the Armed Forces for war. As a result, the problems of the strategic defensive, the pulling back of large masses of troops from under the enemy strike and the going over to a counteroffensive had been poorly worked out. The general recognition of the importance of the initial period of the war with its surprise unleashing were not fully backed up by practical measures to increase troop readiness to repulse aggression. In particular, proceeding from the provisions of military doctrine, there were plans to repulse the first thrust using a limited number of covering troops while the basic forces of the Soviet Army would be deployed for going over to a decisive offensive with the shifting of hostilities to enemy territory. The variation of an extended strategic defensive was not assumed and because of this the establishing of a defensive grouping of the Armed Forces was not planned.

These plans stemmed from the erroneous assumption that the enemy would commence hostilities only with a portion of its forces with their subsequent build-up in the course of the war. In actuality, the Nazis launched a thrust with the main forces which had been concentrated and deployed ahead of time along the western Soviet frontiers. All of this to a large degree predetermined the unsuccessful outcome of the border engagements and the initial period of the war as a whole. The Great Patriotic War was a harsh testing for Soviet military doctrine and required an active search for solving the most important problems of armed combat.

The political goals of the Soviet Union were determined by the socialist state system and by the liberation nature of the war forced on the Soviet people by Nazi Germany.

V.I. Lenin pointed out that "the character of the political goal has a crucial impact on the conduct of the war..."(7) For achieving these the belligerents employ all the forces at their disposal and the decisive ones here are the military, that is, the armed forces.

Having attacked the USSR, the Nazis endeavored to destroy the world's first socialist country and enslave the peoples of the Soviet Union and many others. Under these conditions, the political aims of the war consisted in eliminating the danger hanging over the USSR, expelling the German troops from the Soviet land, helping the European peoples get free of Nazi suppression, create conditions for the free development of peoples along the path of peace and progress and completely eliminate the hated regime. From these stemmed the specific strategic tasks: the elaboration and implementation of the plans for the mobilizing of forces, the organizational development of the armed forces, their strategic deployment and use on land, in the air and at sea; determining the most effective methods and forms for conducting the war, campaigns and strategic operations, leadership over the course of armed combat, the organization of strategic cooperation between the fronts, groups of fronts and armed services; logistic support for the needs of the war.

The treacherous attack by the aggressor and its superiority on the axes of the main thrusts prevented the armies of the first strategic echelon from going over to the defensive. This defensive had been organized under conditions when the Soviet Armed Forces had not yet completed mobilization and operational deployment. Due to the enemy's superiority, particularly on the axes of its main thrusts, due to the poorly conceived and unprepared defenses, the weak motorizing of the formations and field forces as well as shortcomings in the organization of command and all-round support, the Soviet troops were forced to retreat into the interior of the nation. However, under these conditions they were able not only to reduce the rate of advance of the enemy shock groupings but also halt the offensive along the entire front.

Of great significance in conducting the strategic defensive was the effective and prompt use of the strategic reserves and their skillful maneuvering from some axes to others. This made it possible to resolve the problems of restoring a breached strategic front. In the summer of 1941, Headquarters Supreme High Command [Hq SHC] formed the Reserve Front on the western sector for carrying out these tasks, in the summer of 1942, there were the Voronezh and Stalingrad Fronts on the southwestern sector and in the autumn of 1942, the Southwestern Front.

In the course of the defensive actions of the Soviet Armed Forces, the forms of strategic defensive operations by the fronts and groups of fronts underwent further development and these from August 1941 and in 1942 were conducted, as a rule, in zones to 700 km wide and to a depth of 150-300 km.(8) This broadened the

opportunity to pool the efforts of the forces, Armed Services and combat arms participating in them and to more effectively coordinate their actions under a common command. The employment by the Soviet Army of active forms of combat on the strategic defensive made it possible to thwart the aggressor's plans, to cause it serious losses, to hold important lines, economic and administrative centers and create conditions for going over to a counteroffensive. No state in Western Europe which had been subjected to Nazi aggression had been able to resolve similar problems.

The development of the socialist military economy, the more effective use of weapons, the improvement of the organizational structure of the Armed Services and combat arms on the basis of the acquired combat experience and the forming of new large reserves substantially told on the methods of carrying out strategic tasks. In expelling the enemy from the territory of the Soviet Union, the basic type of military operation of the Soviet Armed Forces was the counteroffensive begun as Rostov, Tikhvin and Moscow at the end of 1941 and then carried out at Stalingrad (1942) and Kursk (1943) and ending in 1944 with the liberation of our territory.

Upon reaching the state frontier, the Soviet Army, in accord with its Leninist international policy and the international obligations assumed by our government in 1944-1945, began a campaign for the sake of liberating the people who had fallen under the yoke of Nazi Germany and also launched crushing blows in the aim of completing the defeat of the aggressor in its own lair.

The actions of the Soviet Armed Forces to liberate the enslaved people and to finally defeat the Nazi military machine were carried out predominantly in the form of a strategic offensive and this included a system of simultaneously and successfully conducted operations following a single plan and under the leadership of Hq SHC. As a rule, these were conducted by groups of fronts together with the combined Air Forces and Air Defense Troops, by the partisans, and on the maritime sectors also by naval forces, and was characterized by a growing scope and high effectiveness. While in 1942-1943, this encompassed around one-half of the total length of the Soviet-German Front, in the campaigns beginning with the summer of 1944, the offensive was conducted successfully or simultaneously along its entire extent. The strategic offensive operations involved from 100 to 200 divisions, there were 20,000-40,000 guns and mortars, from 3,000 to 6,000 tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount] and from 2,000 to 7,500 aircraft fighting. Certain of these operations developed along a front of 800-1,000 km and were conducted to a depth of 500-600 km. As a result of these operations, the enemy groupings consisting of from 50 to 100 divisions were defeated.(9)

During the war years, enormous experience was gained in the skillful choice of the axis of the main thrust considering the political, economic and particularly the

military factors, that is, where in accord with the situational conditions the maximum results could be achieved. During the summer-autumn campaign of 1943 and in the winter of 1944, the largest groupings were defeated by launching the main thrusts on the southwestern axis and prerequisites were created for liberating the European countries. The main thrust on the western strategic axis in the summer of 1944 and in the winter of 1945 ensured the shortest route to the vitally important centers and the capital of Nazi Germany. The crushing of the major Wehrmacht grouping here favored the rapid defeat of the enemy and the victorious conclusion of the war.

Instructive also for today is the fact that Hq SHC decisively massed its forces for achieving the set goals on the selected sectors of the main thrusts. As a rule, fighting in the groupings were several front-level field forces including from one-quarter to one-half (and sometimes more) of all the forces of the operational army. Particular attention was given to the quality of the assault groupings. These usually included tank armies, tank and mechanized corps, air armies, artillery of the Supreme High Command Reserve [RVGK], as well as other special units and formations. These groupings were reinforced with long-range aviation, National Air Defense Troops and on the maritime sectors, by the forces and formations of the Navy.

Thus, in the 1944 summer-autumn campaign, for launching the main thrust the width of which was 26 percent of the extent of the entire Soviet-German Front, four front formations were employed (these included all six tank armies), up to 40 percent of the personnel, 48 percent of the guns and mortars, 77 percent of the tanks and SAU and 53 percent of the aircraft. Moreover, in a majority of instances large partisan forces were drawn to these sectors and the main efforts in the area of troop logistical support were concentrated here. Here also were sent the main strategic reserves. Here were representatives of Hq SHC who provided aid to the command of the fronts in seeking out optimum solutions and in resolving all questions.

The high art of the Soviet Command and its capacity to precisely anticipate events were very aptly described by the American journalist Ralph Ingersoll. "The Russians clearly looked at the battlefield as a chessboard; they calculated for many moves ahead, they forced the Germans to constantly shift their forces in order to repel the Russian offensive now on one and then another sector of an enormous chessboard running from the Baltic to the mouth of the Danube. The Germans could never equal the Russians in an understanding of what was happening on the board and evidently after the German generals had exhausted their first, prewar staff studies, the Germans never had a true, fully worked out plan for defeating the Russians." (10)

The rapid development of operations to a great depth was also explained by the high military skill of the Soviet troops, by the level of leadership over the Armed Forces

on the part of Headquarters and command of the troops by all levels of commanders, by the continuous supply of everything necessary for conducting combat and by the high military-political state of the personnel.

The Soviet Army had completely mastered the art of preparing and conducting strategic offensive operations to surround and destroy large enemy groupings. Each of these was marked by an uniqueness and originality of concept and by the employment of new means and forms of military operations. The surrounding of enemy troops was basically achieved by launching pincer strikes, by breaching the front on several axes with the subsequent development of the attacks in depth and the coming out in the flank and rear of the main forces in the operational depth and the pressing of the enemy to the seacoast. Of crucial significance in the surrounding, splitting and destroying of the large Nazi groupings was the commitment to the breach of mobile groups (tank armies, horse-mechanized groups, tank, mechanized and cavalry corps), and in cooperation with the aviation the launching of rapid and deep thrusts against the retreating enemy troops and reserves.

Within the counteroffensive of the Soviet Armed Forces, encirclement operations were carried out the scale of which has not been known in military history. The Battle of Stalingrad which ended with the surrounding and eliminating of a Nazi troop grouping some 330,000 strong, in essence, was just the start of many subsequent offensive operations such as the Korsun-Shevchenkovskiy, Belorussian, Lwow-Sandomierz, Iasi-Kishinev, Budapest, East Prussian, Berlin and Prague. Suffice it to point out that of the 130 enemy divisions destroyed in 1944, over one-half was destroyed and captured in encirclement operations.

There was also the method of defeating the enemy of launching deep splitting thrusts in the aim of dividing it into pieces. This was the case, for example, in the liberation of the Right Bank Ukraine and in the Vistula-Oder Operation.

Experience showed that the achieving of a turning point in the course of a war, the wresting of strategic initiative from the enemy and the going over from the defensive to the counteroffensive comprised one of the most difficult tasks of military art. The Soviet Command successfully carried this out in the course of the counteroffensive at Moscow, Stalingrad and Kursk. In these operations, the looming crisis of the assault capabilities of the Nazi Army was promptly detected, troops were covertly concentrated, counterstrike groups were organized, and the time was skillfully chosen for moving from the defensive to the counteroffensive. As a result, a major strategic success was achieved, the advancing groupings were defeated and the counteroffensive grew into a general strategic offensive on a broad front.

The Soviet Command successfully solved the problem of strategic cooperation and these consisted in coordinating the actions of the fronts, groups of fronts, long-range aviation, the Navy, national air defense troops as well as the partisans in terms of goal, place and time for achieving the common aims of the operations. Cooperation with the long-range aviation was achieved by employing it in the interests of the strategic operations of the groups of fronts, with the Navy and river flotillas by conducting joint actions on the maritime and riverine axes. Measures were coordinated with the National Air Defense Troops to combat enemy aviation in defending the rear facilities of the fronts and armies, and with the partisans in the area of attacking the enemy lines of communications, seizing crossings and the most important facilities.

In the liberating of the European peoples, experience was gained in organizing cooperation with units, formations and field forces of Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia which were participating in the operations. Here a large role was played by personal meetings and direct contacts of the commanders as well as the exchange of operations groups. This ensured a unity of the understanding of tasks and the effective control of troops in the joint actions.

The brilliant victories of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War were achieved due to the wise leadership of the Communist Party. It became a truly fighting party and its Central Committee was a fighting staff, the political and superior strategic leadership of the nation and the Armed Forces.

In the course of the war, an ordered system of centralized strategic leadership of armed combat came into being. Great experience was gained in planning and controlling the field forces of all the Armed Services. Strategic leadership was provided by Hq SHC. Its executive bodies were the General Staff, the staffs of the sectors and fronts, the representatives of Headquarters and the bodies of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the People's Commissariat of the Navy. Centralization of strategic leadership was combined with the calling in by Hq SHC of the commanders and military council members of the fronts as well as other responsible leaders and specialists in planning the operation.

Thus, Soviet military strategy during the years of the Great Patriotic War successfully carried out the tasks which befell it. It demonstrated its superiority over Nazi strategy by skillfully employing all the capabilities which resided in the Soviet state and socioeconomic system. The experience of the Great Patriotic War showed that strategy can only successfully carry out its tasks when it proceeds from a strictly scientific doctrine. The departure from Lenin's ideas of military doctrine on the eve and at the start of the war was the cause of major setbacks for Soviet strategy, and, conversely, the subsequent following of Lenin's doctrinal concepts was the guarantee for the brilliant victories of the USSR Armed Forces.

Soviet military strategy was improved in a number of areas. The first of these was the more effective and conforming use of the economic and military capabilities of the nation and the Armed Forces as well as the moral and foreign policy factors. The essence of the second area is the more effective carrying out of organizational tasks confronting the superior strategic leadership bodies, the improving in the style of their work and this is particularly instructive for present-day conditions.

The experience gained during the years of the last war in selecting the methods and forms of defeating the enemy, employing the Armed Services and combat arms and in resolving many other problems, having enriched Soviet military art, has become a firm basis for the further development of military science.

With the end of the Great Patriotic War, Soviet military strategy continued to be improved considering the new balance of military-political forces in the world. Here the increased economic and defense might of the USSR and the fundamental qualitative changes in military affairs based upon the achievements of scientific and technical progress have had and continue to have a substantial impact.

Having switched to peacetime, creative labor, the CPSU and the Soviet government, loyal to a peace-loving policy, were forced to consider that the governments of the previous Allies in the anti-Hitler coalition had abandoned the agreed-upon principles for the postwar organization of the world. International imperialism set out on an outright preparation for a new war and conducting a policy "from a position of strength" vis-a-vis the USSR and the other socialist countries. The appearance of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, the advance in other types of weapons and equipment and the introduction of them into the armed forces brought about fundamental changes in the views on the nature of war and the methods of conducting military operations and demanded a revision of many theoretical provisions of military art as a whole. In this situation, Soviet military strategy was confronted with a series of fundamentally new tasks the most important of which were: research on the nature and methods of conducting a nuclear war, the organizational development of the Armed Forces and their training considering the repulsing of a possible massed nuclear strike by the aggressors, the maintaining of constant high combat readiness of the troops (naval forces) and the ensuring of their organized entry into the war under any conditions of its outbreak.

The main provisions of Soviet military strategy are based upon a profound awareness that in the present-day situation, where enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons have been stockpiled representing a danger for the fate of mankind itself, a nuclear war cannot be a means of achieving political aims. "At present," pointed out the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, M.S. Gorbachev, "it is apparent to everyone that the old

notions about war as a means of achieving political aims have outlived themselves. In the nuclear age these obsolete dogmas foster a policy which can lead to a universal conflagration."(11)

Under these conditions, in accord with the defensive military strategy of the Warsaw Pact, the main tasks of Soviet military strategy are to prevent a war and elaborate the methods for repelling possible aggression.

Soviet military strategy, in being based upon the Marxist-Leninist methodology and on the advantages of the socialist social and state system, is in constant creative development, embodying acquired experience and all that is new provided by the present-day scientific and technical revolution. Of crucial significance for the shaping of strategic views is the leading role of the CPSU and its Central Committee which are carrying out the Leninist policy of peace and the defense of the victories of socialism.

Footnotes

1. M.V. Frunze, "Izbrannyye proizvedeniya" [Selected Works], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 293.
2. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 35, p 395.
3. Ibid., Vol 39, p 237.
4. M.V. Frunze, op. cit., pp 64-65.
5. "Vremennyy polevoy ustav RKKA (PU-36)" [Provisional RKKA Field Manual (PU-36)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1937, p 9.
6. "Polevoy ustav RKKA (PU-39). Proyekt" [RKKA Field Manual (PU-39). Draft], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1939, p 9.
7. "Leninskiy sbornik" [Lenin Collection], Vol XI, p 429.
8. "Vtoraya mirovaya voyna. Itogi i uroki" [World War II. Results and Lessons], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1985, p 299.
9. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 7, 1979, p 562.
10. R. Ingersoll, "Sovershenno sekretno" [Top Secret], Moscow, Gosudarstvennoye Izd-vo Inostrannoy Literatury, 1947, p 418.
11. PRAVDA, 27 July 1987.

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Operations Directorate of General Staff During Great Patriotic War

18010422b Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 5, May 88 (signed to press 21 Apr 88) pp 12-18

[Article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art," by Maj Gen A.P. Antonov, candidate of military sciences: "Operations Directorate of the General Staff in the Years of the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] In October 1939, in the General Staff the Operations Directorate(1) was set up on the basis of the First (Operations) Section and this was brought about by the sharp increase in the scope of the tasks in the area of the organizational development and training of the Soviet Armed Forces due to the commenced World War II. The Corps Commissar I.V. Smorodinov (subsequently, Col Gen) was appointed its chief. The Operations Directorate became the main working body of the General Staff and organized its work in close cooperation with the other directorates and sections, the staffs of the combat arms and services of the NKO [People's Commissariat of Defense].

The situation which developed unfavorably on the fronts with the start of the Great Patriotic War and the forced going over of the Soviet troops to the strategic defensive forced the General Staff to focus chief attention on carrying out operational-strategic tasks. This brought about **organizational restructurings of the Operations Directorate**. In August 1941, in the place of the 12 sections which had existed prior to this, 8 sectors were set up: Northern, Northwestern, Western, Central, Southwestern, Southern, Near Eastern and Far Eastern.(2) At the same time, in the directorate a special group of operations officers was established for troop liaison and this soon became an independent group which in 1943 began to be called by Hq SHC the Corps of General Staff Officers. Maj Gen A.M. Vasilevskiy was appointed the head of the directorate and at the same time the deputy chief of the General Staff.

However, such an organization under the conditions of the rapidly changing military situation in 1941-1942 was flawed. In the first place, the main sectors (Northwestern, Western, Central and Southwestern) did not fully provide leadership over several fronts and the numerousness of the sections split the forces, distracting them from carrying out the main task of dependable control over the troop (naval) operations. Moreover, the number of fronts was constantly changed. For this reason, in May 1942, sectors were set up in the Operations Directorate predominantly for each front. The sections of organizational-reporting, operational movements and signals were transferred to the newly established directorates of the General Staff. In March 1942, the Section for Operational Preparations was turned into the Information Sector. The excluding of a portion of the sections from the Operations Directorate freed the latter from

carrying out many tasks not inherent to it and made it possible to focus the main efforts on doing operational and informational work in the interests of the General Staff and Hq SHC.(3)

In 1943, the Soviet Army once and for all took the strategic initiative. The formations and units of Poland and Czechoslovakia which had been organized on Soviet territory joined in the armed combat. The scope of combat operations and the volume of tasks which had to be effectively carried out increased unusually. This, in turn, forced the incorporation of changes in the command structure. From May the Operations Directorate was headed by Lt Gen S.M. Shtemenko. He held this position until the war's end.

In June 1943, the chief of the General Staff in the aim of systematizing the work of the officer representatives in the operational army took a decision to distribute them over the sections of the Operations Directorate calculating five-ten men per front and one or two per separate army and per air army.(4) This was explained by the fact that in the work of the officers representing the General Staff on the fronts there were organizational shortcomings which had a negative effect upon the execution of the tasks confronting them.

The generals and officers of the Operations Directorate, as representatives of the General Staff, provided great help in training and organizing the staffs of the allied formations and units. Constantly being in the troop organizations, they fought along with their brothers in arms until the war's end.

In the subsequent years there were no major organizational changes. Only the sectors, having carried out their tasks, were abolished and in the event of necessity new ones were set up.

The style and methods of work of Operations Directorate developed as experience was gained and as the collective was organized and shaped. The work methods developed before the war were not always applicable. The transition of the directorate to activities under wartime conditions occurred without sufficient clarity and rather slowly. But the situation on the fronts changed abruptly each day and became more complicated. There was a greater number of tasks, and a flow of instructions, orders, directives, requests, statements and so forth. The collecting of situational data was in the forefront. The attempts to assemble objective information on the enemy, the nature and direction of its actions, to analyze these and provide corresponding information to the leadership during the first days of the war, in employing the old work methods, often did not lead to the desired results.

In the aim of eliminating the existing shortcomings and successful leadership over the combat of the fronts, it was essential first of all to clearly define the limits of responsibility and the range of functional duties of each section, sector, the chiefs and their subordinates. For this

reason, in November 1941, instructions were worked out and approved establishing the responsibility of the chief of the sector for his area and for constant complete guidance for Hq SHC and the chief of the General Staff concerning the situation on it as well as for the prompt issuing of directives, orders and instructions to the troops.

The chief of a sector was always to have exhaustive information on the state of affairs on the front (about the enemy and his own troops); work out the draft directives, orders and instructions of Headquarters and the chief of the General Staff; compile statements, the operational calculations and requests for logistic support of the troops; exercise control over the course of combat and the measures of the operational and combat training of nonfighting fronts and reserve formations. Moreover, he was entrusted with handling the requests of the fronts and armies; he was to promptly work out the draft reports and report them to the chief of the General Staff and to Headquarters; inspect the fulfillment of the given directives, orders and instructions, and ensure their rapid issuing to their destination; keep the reporting and operational maps; maintain continuous contact with the fronts and armies and organize the work of their subordinates.(5)

Thus, after carrying out a series of organizational measures, after clearly delimiting functional duties and eliminating the serious shortcomings disclosed during the first days of the war, the directorate only by the winter of 1941 was able to switch to working according to wartime conditions.

One of the reasons for the lack of coordination and discrepancies in the activities of the Operations Directorate was the frequent changing of its chiefs and who were changed eight times from the start of the war until May 1943. Gens K.G. Malandin, V.M. Zlobin, A.M. Vasilevskiy, P.I. Bodin, N.F. Vatutin, V.D. Ivanov, S.M. Teteshkin and A.I. Antonov over the short period they remained in this position (3-4 months) naturally were unable to organize clear, effective and planned work.

By the autumn of 1943, the Operations Directorate had a highly trained, close-knit and experienced collective of operators. A style of work had been developed which made it possible to thoroughly analyze the situation and proceeding from it to set the tasks, to calculate everything in terms of time and available materiel, and to back up each operational measure and any proposal. The workday conditionally began at 0700 hours. From that time the chiefs of the sectors began collecting information over the previous night. At the same time, with the representatives of the other directorates and sections of the General Staff using a map they clarified the enemy's position, and generalized data on the state of our troops. At any moment the officers of the sectors should be ready to report on the situation and state their ideas on employing the troops of the sector. With the representatives of Hq SHC they traveled to the fronts and provided

the latter with the requisite materials. The chief of the directorate, his deputies and the chiefs of the sectors personally worked out the most important and urgent documents for reporting to the chief of the General Staff and to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and took part in preparing and conducting command-staff exercises and drills for the field forces and formations in the Reserve of the Supreme High Command [RVGK].

As the materials were ready, the chiefs of the sectors reported to the chief of the Operations Directorate who, by 0900 hours himself had generalized data on the enemy and our own troops, a schedule of troop movements as well as information on the available reserves and their state. At the same time, one of his deputies prepared the first morning combat report. At 1000 hours this was assigned by the chief of the directorate and reported by him to the Supreme Command-in-Chief.

After the morning, the chief of the Operations Directorate received the chiefs of the other sectors, the chiefs of the combat arms and services, he clarified the situation on the fronts with their commanders and studied the reports from the representatives of Headquarters and the General Staff officers on the fronts. In the sectors routine work continued to generalize the data on the situation for the first half of the day. At 1500 hours, full information was reported to the chief of the General Staff, as a rule, by the deputy chief of the Operations Directorate. Sometimes the chiefs of those sectors where the situation was particularly acute at the given moment were invited to the briefing. Moreover, they reported to the chief of the General Staff how the briefing had gone with the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, what instructions had been received from him and what prepared directives and orders for the troops had been submitted for signature.

By 2100 hours, the final report for the day had been prepared along with the maps for each front with the situational data plotted on them and showing the position of our troops as well as a composite map for the entire Soviet-German Front. After 2300 hours, these materials were submitted to Hq SHC. The leadership and the officers of the Operations Directorate worked at this pace until the war's end. Their work was not easy. Without any consideration to time or physical and mental stress they effectively carried out many diverse problems. "The enormous scope of this work," wrote Army Gen S.M. Shtemenko, "and its urgency made service here extremely fatiguing. They worked to the limit of their ability, knowing in advance that they would be strictly reprimanded for even the slightest error." (6) Not sparing themselves for the sake of the common cause, the generals and officers showed a feeling of high responsibility and unprecedented capacity for work. Showing the greatest productiveness in work were the deputy chiefs of the directorate, Gens A.A. Gryzlov, N.A. Lomov, I.N. Ryzhkov, the chiefs of the sectors Gens M.A. Kraskovets, S.I. Guneyev, G.M. Chumakov,

V.D. Utkin, V.F. Mernov, S.M. Yenyukov, N.Ye. Sokolov, K.F. Vasilchenko, Ya.A. Kutsev, M.N. Kochergin, S.A. Petrovskiy and S.P. Platonov, the operations officers A.P. Chumakin, G.G. Yeliseyev, N.F. Yanin, A.S. Bashnagyan and others who subsequently became generals. (7)

Many of the generals and officers who worked in the Operations Directorate and gained great experience in operations work during the war years were promoted to command and staff positions in the operational army, they commanded fronts and armies and headed their staffs. Among them were Gens A.M. Vasilevskiy (subsequently MSU), N.F. Vatutin, A.N. Bogolyubov, V.V. Kurasov, P.I. Bodin, G.K. Malandin, N.M. Sharokhin and others.

The planning of operations held a significant place in the activities of the Operations Directorate. The initial sketch of the over-all plan of an operation was usually made in the directorate. As a rule, one or more rarely two officers were assigned to work it out. Then the circle of persons working on it was increased due to the operations and other directorates and sections of the General Staff as well as the representatives from the front or group of fronts. The work was carried out consecutively and at strictly established times. The directives and orders were usually written by the same persons, they were short in volume (one or two pages) but extensive in content and excluded any ambiguous interpretation. The over-all plan was submitted to the chief of the General Staff and then for approval to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Only after this did the staffs of the fronts and armies begin the detailed planning of the operation and the working out of orders, directives, combat instructions and other planning documents.

In the work of the Operations Directorate particular attention was given to **maintaining constant contact with the command of the fronts**. In addition to the leadership of the Operations Directorate and the sectors, this task was carried out up to the end of 1943 also by the corps of officers assigned to the fronts which was specially organized under the General Staff. This corps was headed by Gens N.I. Dubinin, Sh.N. Geniatullin and F.T. Peregodov. The subsequent incorporation of the officers from the corps in the TOE of the Operations Directorate (the corresponding sectors) made it possible to improve significantly the contact with the command of the fronts and their staffs, to effectively influence the adopted decisions and provide complete aid in continuous command and logistic support.

The range of duties for the liaison officers in the troops and staffs was rather broad. They inspected and reported on the position and state of the troops and the supply of everything requisite for life and combat. Many of them repeatedly fell into complicated combat situations, they were wounded and received high governmental decorations. Surrendering their lives in fighting for the motherland were Capts S.V. Berezkin, S.F. Safonov and N.M.

Shikhalev, Majs V.M. Tkachev, K.N. Nikulin, Ye.S. Kukhar, M.Ya. Dyshlenko, A.T. Shiyan and P.M. Zargaryan, Lt Cols I.M. Burlak, V.N. Venediktov, A.D. Markov, V.F. Lyskin, A.A. Pzdneyakov and others.(8)

The General Staff officers were constantly in the staffs, at the command and observation posts and auxiliary command posts; they visited the troop positions; they inspected defensive works, communication centers, transport routes, airfields, dumps, production, repair and medical facilities; they interrogated prisoners, deserters and local inhabitants; they became familiar with captured enemy documents and enemy weapons; they corresponded and spoke with the General Staff and employed all means of transport and communications. It was their duty also to make certain that the staffs and troops strictly observed military secrecy particularly to ensure surprise for the start of an operation, to report on the most instructive combat and operations, to generalize the experience of the employment of new weapons, tactical procedures and methods of command employed by our troops and the enemy and to constantly keep their working map. They worked in close contact with the commanders and chiefs of staff of the fronts and armies and were often present in the announcing of decisions by the commanders as well as at military council sessions. In turn, the chiefs of staff of the fronts and the armies, in giving instructions to the field forces and formations for the forthcoming operation, as a rule, informed the General Staff officer about the nature of the decision taken and the orders issued.

When the commanders of fronts and the chiefs of staff visited the General Staff, the chief of the General Staff received them without fail in the presence of the chief of the Operations Directorate and a representative of the corresponding sector. All the proposals of the front command were examined jointly and conclusions drawn up on them.

The organization of **operational information** was of important significance in the work of the Operations Directorate. This task was assigned to the Operational Preparations Section (from March 1942, Information Section). This worked out and distributed under a special list such informational documents as the operational summaries, the reports to Hq SHC and the operations guidelines (up to 31 December 1941).

Each day by 0830 hours and 2030 hours the Soviet Information Bureau was sent releases for subsequent publication in the open press and for broadcasting by radio. These described the situation on the Soviet-German Front briefly with the indicating of important events and facts. In addition to working out the designated documents, the Information Section during the entire war kept a map of the operational situation on the fronts for each day, and from 18 January 1942 up to victory with an interval of every 3-5 days, a strategic situational map.

The dates and the procedure for submitting operational information by the staffs of the fronts and the separate armies to the Operational Directorate were repeatedly clarified by the corresponding instructions of the General Staff. In line with the discovered serious shortcomings in the organization of information, on 5 June 1943, a directive was issued which determined the levels which should possess complete data on the operational situation and the effective and numerical strength of the fronts, districts and armies as well as for the entire Soviet Army as a whole in addition to the procedure for keeping count and submitting reports.

One of the important areas of work for the operations directorate during the war years was the **organization and leadership of the operational training** of command personnel and staffs of the nonfighting fronts, the military districts and the field forces withdrawn into the Headquarters reserve. For each period of instruction (summer and winter), a subject corresponding to their purpose was worked out for them and a directive issued on the operational training of the troops. Adjustments and changes were incorporated by additional orders. Here the instructions were marked by a high level of detail. For example, in addition to the Directive on Operational Training of the Far Eastern Front for the Winter of 1943-1944, the front commander, along with the subjects of the initial period of the war, was instructed to include in the plan a number of questions concerning subsequent operations with the conducting of military games on maps for some of them.

For further increasing and systematizing knowledge on operational art and tactics of field forces and formations, it was proposed that they plan and organize the study of the principles of an army operation (offensive and defensive) and the actions of a reinforced rifle corps in the main types of combat using the method of group exercises and military map games. For raising the level of staff efficiency and for increasing the skills of officers on all levels of staffs, they recommended the regular holding of staff drills to master practical skills relating to the positions held and involvement in operational training measures conducted according to the plans of the Pacific Fleet and Amur Naval Flotilla.(9)

The Operations Directorate not only worked out directives on operational training but also provided practical leadership and supervision over the course of its conduct as well as summing up the results. The summary plans for operational and combat training, the over-all concepts for the command-staff exercises and military games of the inactive fronts and armies, the Pacific Fleet and Amur Naval Flotilla were systematically reviewed in the directorate, specific comments were made on them and recommendations given. In particular, the chief of staff of the Far Eastern Front in February 1944 was instructed that in the operational and combat training plan submitted by him for the winter of 1943-1944 there was no unified method of planning in the front's armies.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the army commanders did not personally conduct a single combined-arms exercise, assigning this to other individuals and taking on only the conduct of games. In the front an excessive number of various assemblies had been planned without a clearly expressed goal and subject.(10)

In the directive, summing up the results of the operational training of the Transcaucasian Front for the 1943 summer period, it was recommended that the entire system of operational training be so organized that during the winter training period the generals and officers of the staffs would steadily increase their firm theoretical and practical knowledge conforming to the present-day requirements of operational art. According to this document, the main forms of operational training were to be the conducting of command-staff exercises with communications equipment and troop exercises. Particular attention had to be paid to the carefulness of their organization and the instructiveness of the content as well as to the selection and training of skilled umpires. As additional forms they recommended holding reports and lectures on the materials of the Great Patriotic War and the operations of the Japanese armies in China and on the Pacific.(11)

Thus, regardless of the fact that the Operations Directorate concentrated its main efforts on ensuring the organization and leadership over the armed combat of the operational fronts, due to the carrying out of effective operational training in the nonfighting fronts, their combat readiness and capability in the East during the fighting in the West were on a rather high level.

Relations and contacts with the other directorates (sections) of the General Staff held an important place in the daily activities of the operations directorate. During the war years in holding a leading position among them, the Operations Directorate did not report to the chief of the General Staff, a single question requiring the taking of a final decision without seeking their agreement. With many chiefs of the directorates (sections) of the General Staff, the chief of the Operations Directorate and the chiefs of the sectors and sections had personal contacts and carried out the posed tasks by common effort.

In the Operations Directorate great attention was given to **studying, generalizing and disseminating the experience of the war** in the operational army as well as in training reserves in the military districts and command personnel in the military schools. This task was carried out not only independently, but also in close contact initially with the section and later the Directorate of the General Staff on the Use of the War's Experience. The materials worked out jointly told positively on the combat successes of our troops and contributed to the development of Soviet military art during the years of the Great Patriotic War.

Footnotes

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 7a, inv. 913, file 1, sheet 156.
2. Ibid., inv. 68, file 1, sheets 1-4.
3. Ibid., file 2, sheets 71-82, 265-270, 310-311.
4. Ibid., inv. 73, file 4, sheet 91.
5. Ibid., folio 19a, inv. 1078, file 2, sheets 34-36.
6. S.M. Shtemenko, "Generalnyy shtab v gody voyny" [The General Staff During the War Years], Moscow, Voenizdat, 2d Revised and Supplemented Edition, Book 1, 1975, p 180.
7. Ibid., pp 191-193.
8. Ibid., p 201.
9. TsAMO, folio 48a, inv. 2, file 29, sheets 95-99.
10. Ibid., inv. 3, file 26, sheets 384-385.
11. Ibid., inv. 2, file 29, sheets 107-112.

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Long-Range Air Strikes Against Enemy Airfields
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[Article by Col V.V. Anuchin, candidate of military sciences: "Strikes of Long-Range Aviation Against Enemy Airfields"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] With the start of the Great Patriotic War, the enemy seized air supremacy and this put the Soviet Troops under difficult conditions. The developing situation required the rapid defeat of the Nazi German air groupings. Our Air Forces carried out this task in the course of daily combat as well as in specially conducted air operations. Nazi aviation was destroyed chiefly air combat as well as at airfields. The long-range aviation (ADD)(1) numbering more than 1,300 Il-4, TB-3 and TB-7 aircraft took an active part in attacking its base areas.

The ADD formations began regular bombing of enemy airfields in July 1941. They participated in a massed raid conducted upon instructions of Hq SHC in the aim of weakening the opposing air grouping in a zone from the Baltic to Black Seas. At 0300 hours on 8 July, 125 long-range bombers made bombing strikes against 14 airfields. After these the Air Forces of the Northern,

Northwestern, Southwestern and Southern Fronts attacked another 28 airfields.(2) As a result, a large number of enemy aircraft was destroyed and damaged. Subsequently, when the Nazi Army had advanced deep into our territory and bombing raids against Moscow were possible, the Soviet Command also undertook countermeasures. During the period from 22 July through 15 August, the ADD formations attacked 67 enemy airfields on the western sector and this significantly reduced the activeness of enemy aviation.(3)

The Directive from Hq SHC of 10 October 1941 to the Commander of the Soviet Army Air Forces, Gen P.F. Zhigarev, stated: "According to data supplied by agents, on 12-13 October along the entire Western Front, the enemy intends to conduct a massed air strike with 1,000-1,500 aircraft against the industrial and aviation centers, railroad junctions, bridges, crossings, staffs, railheads and troop battle formations." In carrying out Headquarters' demands to decisively destroy Nazi aviation at its airfields, an air operation was conducted from 11 through 18 October involving the Air Forces of the Northwestern, Western, Bryansk, Southwestern and Southern Fronts as well as the ADD formations. Over a period of 8 days, at night and during the day, the frontal (tactical) aviation attacked the close airfields while the long-range bombers hit 30 airfields which were most distant from the front line on the Northwestern, Western and Southern sectors. Enemy losses were over 500 aircraft. Particularly effective were the operations of the air regiments from the 40th, 42d, 51st, 52d and 81st ADD Divisions. At the Orsha Airfield alone, crews from the 51st Division destroyed around 150 aircraft.(4)

At the beginning of November 1941, Hq SHC learned that the Nazi Command was planning massed raids against Moscow on the day of the 24th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In line with this, Gen P.F. Zhigarev received the task of conducting an air operation from 5 through 8 November in the aim of destroying enemy aviation at the airfields and thwarting the enemy's plan. Involved in this were the Air Forces of the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk Fronts, aviation units of the Moscow Military District and the 81st ADD Division (commander, Col A.Ye. Golovanov). Over a period of 3 days, they bombed 28 airfields and on 12 and 15 November another 19, destroying, respectively, 60 and 47 aircraft.(5) The barbarous plan of destroying Moscow from the air was checked.

As a total over the first 6 months of the war, the long-range bombers made 1,438 aircraft sorties in the course of which attacks were made against Nazi air bases. The raids were conducted chiefly at night. The main objectives to be destroyed or knocked out were aircraft at parking areas, hangars, fuel and ammunition dumps, headquarters, signals centers, command posts and runways as well as the quarters of flight and technical personnel. In darkness the effectiveness of counteractions by enemy antiaircraft artillery and fighters was reduced and as a result of this the losses of long-range

bombers was reduced. However, at the same time the organization and execution of the flight were substantially complicated as well as the detection of camouflaged enemy field airstrips. For this reason in preparing for the sortie, the pilots carefully studied the aerial photographs for characteristic markers, the position of parking areas, dumps, antiaircraft weapons and other airfield facilities. Moreover, several hours before the raid the command conducted a final reconnaissance of the targets. The planes conducting the final reconnaissance, in employing illuminating flares, established the presence and position of enemy aircraft at the airfields and radioed the data to the command post.

The bombers operated singly or in small groups (a flight or squadron). They approached the target from different altitudes and with a certain time interval relative to one another. For achieving surprise the run, whenever possible, was made from the direction of the territory occupied by the Nazi troops and at slow speed. In the absence of antiaircraft fire, bombing was made from an altitude of 400-500 m and this also made it possible to fire on the targets with machine guns. In the event of intense resistance from the antiaircraft artillery, the crews bombed from altitudes of 1,000-2,000 m, maneuvering in such a manner that three or four aircraft were in the airfield region simultaneously. This somewhat dispersed the fire of the ground antiaircraft weapons. For increasing the effectiveness of the strikes and for providing a greater time operating against the enemy, the pilots made three or five passes, remaining up to 10-15 minutes over the target. Sometimes flights were made by bombers in pairs. The first of these illuminated the airfield, created fires and neutralized the fire from the antiaircraft weapons and searchlights. The second dropped its bombload on the aircraft parking areas. High explosive, incendiary and fragmentation bombs were employed as weapons.

From the autumn of 1941, the ADD pilots began to employ such combat methods as blockading the enemy airfields. One of the first to begin doing this was the squadron commander from the 750th Bomber Air Regiment, Hero of the Soviet Union, Maj Ye.P. Fedorov. He flew his aircraft into the area of the assigned airfield, he waited until the Nazi bombers returned from their mission and covertly approached them. After turning on the ground searchlights, the crew released its bombs on the runway and parking areas and opened up machine gun fire against the aircraft on their landing approach. Panic broke out on the ground and in the air. Landing at the blockaded airfield and the taking off from it were excluded for a certain time. However, it was still impossible to achieve substantial results in destroying enemy aviation at the airfields. The basic reasons for this were the shortage of forces and the lack of experience among the commanders and staffs in organizing the raids as well as the strong air defenses of the strike objectives.

At the beginning of 1942, industry increased the production of the Il-4 aircraft. In the interests of an organizational strengthening, the individual ADD divisions in

March were formed into an operational field force directly under Hq SHC. Some 356 aircraft, 9 staffs of divisions, 20 regiments, 14 airfield service battalions, a navigators school, 2 head aviation dumps and a number of repair bodies were transferred from the Air Forces to the ADD.(6) As a result of the increase in the aircraft fleet, the opportunity arose for the massed employment of long-range bombers. Thus, during the first days of June 1942, the enemy had concentrated over 120 aircraft at the Bryansk Airfield and these aircraft were employed to attack the Soviet troops on the Moscow, Kharkov and Leningrad sectors. The ADD was given the mission of destroying the given air group. During the night of 14 June, 145 Il-4 bombed the airfield. The enemy losses were 37 bombers, 10 fighters and 150 men of the flight and technical personnel.(7)

In the autumn of 1942, the ADD formations were most active on the Stalingrad and Caucasus sectors. For example, at the end of September, air reconnaissance detected a large number (around 300) of Nazi aircraft based at the Armavir Airfield. As a result of a concentrated strike by several Il-4 groups during the night of the 26th, the enemy lost around 70 bombers.(8) In the preparations of the Soviet troops for the counteroffensive, the Air Forces Command conducted an air operation to destroy enemy aviation at the airfields drawing on the forces of the 8th Air Army and ADD formations in the aim "of weakening the enemy aviation and equalizing the ratio of air forces by the start of our troop counteroffensive." Over a period of 2 nights (on the 28th and 29th of October 1942), the 24th, 53d and 62d ADD Divisions, in cooperation with the 272d Night Bomber Air Division of the 8th Air Army, made 502 aircraft sorties and launched strikes at 8 airfields, destroying 20 aircraft.(9)

In 1942, the aviation industry and repair bodies delivered 650 aircraft for the ADD and this made it possible to man up the existing regiments as well as constitute new ones. The increase in the long-range bomber fleet influenced the bomber battle formations. They began sending out a weather scout ahead of each strike group (squadron). At the head of the battle formation was the squadron commander and it was his task to carry out final reconnaissance and illuminate the target; behind him was a crew duplicating his functions and then came the bomber group and the follow-up photographer.

The involvement of the ADD in attacking airfields during the first period of the Great Patriotic War played a definite role in the fight for air supremacy. Its pilots made over 7,500 aircraft sorties in carrying out this mission. However, due to the lack of forces, the long-range bombers operated predominantly in small groups. There was a desire to simultaneously attack all the detected airfields and this dispersed their efforts. The raids were hurriedly prepared, without conducting detailed reconnaissance and working out questions of cooperation. Proper attention was not paid to the neutralizing of air defense weapons and as a result of this the ADD suffered heavy losses.

In the second period, due to the combat experience gained by the command and the staffs and to the quantitative and qualitative growth of the aircraft fleet, the picture changed. Wave operations began to be combined with concentrated strikes. Clandestine and air reconnaissance began to be conducted intensely at the base areas as well as for the size and placement of enemy aviation at the airfields, the conditions of its combat activities and the air defense system.

Upon instructions of Hq SHC, the ADD formations in January-March 1943 conducted an independent air operation in the course of which attacks were made repeatedly against 19 airfields. For example, they made 3 raids against the Orsha Airfield, destroying 16 aircraft, 2 hangars, 37 motor vehicles and several ammunition dumps.(11) The air bases of Seshcha, Bryansk, Orel and Zaporozhye were bombed more than 10 times each.

In the spring of the same year, the 50th and 62d Air Divisions (a total of 200 aircraft) under the command of the deputy ADD commander, Gen N.S. Skripko, participated in an air operation which preceded the offensive of the Northern Caucasus Front in the aim of liberating the Taman Peninsula. The air operation was carried out by the forces of the 4th and 5th Air Armies of the Northern Caucasus Front, the 17th Air Army of the Southwestern Front, the 8th Air Army of the Southern Front and the Air Forces of the Black Sea Fleet. The basic mission was to weaken as much as possible the 4th Air Fleet of Nazi Germany the units of which were based at airfields in the Crimea, the Kuban and the Southern Ukraine, and win air supremacy by the start of the front's offensive. The plan envisaged the launching of attacks against 18 airfields where reconnaissance had discovered the largest accumulation of aircraft.

The air operation commenced on 20 April and lasted 8 days. The ADD crews operated at night against the airfields of Kerch, Bagerovo, Saki, Sarabuz, Stalino, Mariupol and Zaporozhye which were most distant from the front line (up to 300-350 km). Particularly effective were the bombings of the Crimean air bases of Saki and Sarabuz as here 100 and 70 enemy aircraft were destroyed and damaged, respectively. The total enemy losses on the ground over the period from 17 through 29 April were 260 aircraft.(11) This forced the Nazi Command to redeploy a significant portion of its aviation to airfields located in the deep rear and this had a positive effect on the air situation during the first days of the offensive by our troops in the area of Krymskaya Station.

On 30 April, the State Defense Committee [GKO] approved a decree for constituting 8 air corps in the ADD. The total number of aircraft in them was raised to 700 and by the end of the year had reached 1,047.(12) The aircraft fleet consisted of modernized Il-4, the bomber version of the Li-2 transports and a small number of TB-7 (Pe-8) heavy aircraft and the B-25 received from the Allies under Lend Lease.